UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.552
6 January 2000

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 552nd MEETING*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 1 June 1999, at 4 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. MBOI

CONTENTS

COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER COMPETENT BODIES

* No summary record was issued for the 551st meeting (closed).

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.99-42237 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER COMPETENT BODIES (agenda item 7)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the speakers on her list to give a brief account of the activities of the organization they represented before entering into a discussion with Committee members.

2. Ms. MADUAKOH (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that children, together with women and the environment, were one of the three priority areas for action by UNHCR. In fulfilment of its mandate for international protection, the Office of the High Commissioner carried out a whole range of programmes to help children, who represented 52 per cent of the world population of refugees. Regional child policy officers had been appointed to follow up the study by Graça Machel on the impact of armed conflict on children. UNHCR had five additional officers, in West Africa, the horn of Africa, Central Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Europe. Furthermore, a pilot project to teach refugees the techniques of conflict resolution and peace-building had been launched in Kenya. UNHCR, in cooperation with the International Save the Children Alliance, was also taking a number of new initiatives in the area of capacity-building. In West Africa it was setting up regional teams to help children in emergencies, in the horn of Africa it was improving the effectiveness of its family reunion programmes for unaccompanied children, and in Europe it was distributing a handbook on good practice for dealing with children separated from their parents. In Liberia, UNHCR was working with UNICEF to deliver a programme for the reintegration of repatriated children. The initiative entitled "Action for the Rights of Children" had been expanded, with the development of two new and comprehensive training modules, one of which was devoted to international legal standards and principles. UNHCR was also active in the area of education in tolerance. For example, conflict transformation and reconciliation programmes were being used successfully in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Crimea. Meanwhile, programmes to educate girls were being carried out in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Pakistan. Two programmes for the reintegration of child soldiers were being carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Liberia. Those children were given psychosocial support, remedial lessons, vocational training and lessons in peace education. In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR provided a number of programmes for adolescents, including programmes on the prevention of drug addiction, AIDS and early marriage. It also organized some paid activities, such as the collection and distribution of wood, so that the young people living in the camps had something to do.

3. To conclude, she stressed that the Committee's discussions with States parties on refugee children were particularly useful for UNHCR, and she hoped that States parties would give more information on the implementation of article 22 of the Convention.

4. Ms. SARDENBERG welcomed the cooperation between UNHCR and the Committee and asked if it would be possible to be supplied with documents on the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner concerning young girls.

5. Ms. KARP said she would like to know if the many projects mentioned were evaluated while they were being carried out.

6. Mr. DOEK asked whether UNHCR had worked out a specific strategy for unaccompanied children or children separated from their parents, who formed a particularly vulnerable group.

7. Ms. MADUAKOH (UNHCR) said that most of the projects she had mentioned had been started two or three years earlier and that they had begun to be evaluated during the current year. UNHCR had prepared guidelines on unaccompanied children.

8. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the representative of UNHCR for her contribution.

9. Mr. GHODSE (International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)) said that the Board had been established in 1968 under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Like the Committee on the Rights of the Child, INCB was an independent treaty body. Its 13 members were elected by the Economic and Social Council and served in a personal capacity. INCB was responsible for checking compliance with drug control treaties and helping Governments in that area. It dealt both with licit channels, ensuring that medical and scientific needs were met, and with illicit channels, combating the illicit manufacture, trafficking and abuse of drugs.

10. In its annual reports, INCB noted disturbing patterns of drug use among young people. In that respect, article 33 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which required States parties to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, was particularly important and could serve as the basis for cooperation between INCB and the Committee. The principle underlying article 33 was that children should be shielded from the scourge of drugs. That principle must be given precedence over attempts to abuse the right to freedom of expression by encouraging young people to take dangerous substances. Given the speed of new communications media, such messages could have alarming consequences. The challenge for Governments was to find the right balance between the right to freedom of expression and the right of children to grow up in a world without the risk of becoming a slave to drugs.

11. The CHAIRPERSON stressed that the Committee was deeply concerned at the increase in drug addiction among young people and at the lack of information on the subject supplied by States parties. For that reason she welcomed the initiative by INCB to cooperate with the Committee.

12. Ms. KARP said that the INCB reports could be extremely useful for the Committee. Noting that, under article 39 of the Convention, States parties were obliged to promote the recovery of children whose rights, particularly those addressed in article 33, had been violated, she asked whether INCB monitored steps taken in that area and whether it carried out assessments of preventive measures taken at the national level.

13. Mr. DOEK asked whether INCB had defined policies, strategies and priorities for the implementation of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

14. Ms. SARDENBERG said that INCB could also help the Committee by giving it advice on the best way to broach the question of drugs with a particular country, on the basis of the information it had on the situation in the country concerned.

15. The CHAIRPERSON asked if INCB provided States parties with any help in formulating the measures they could take to prevent, punish and treat drug addiction.

16. Mr. GHODSE (INCB) explained that INCB consisted of three branches: a judicial branch - the Board itself, a legislative branch - the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which consisted of 33 governors and met annually, and an executive branch - the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). INCB therefore effectively provided assistance to States parties, through UNDCP, particularly by offering training programmes. INCB was also placing greater emphasis on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation measures. Thus, in 1972 the Protocol Amending the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs had been adopted in order to include references to treatment and rehabilitation in the Convention. The 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances went even further, providing for punishment to be replaced by treatment and rehabilitation. Moreover, in June 1998 the General Assembly had adopted the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, the implementation of which by States parties was regularly monitored by INCB and UNDCP. Similarly, in its annual reports, INCB had gradually put the emphasis less on reducing the supply and on applying the laws and more on reducing demand and on prevention. Finally, he welcomed the idea of cooperating closely with the Committee in the future. He believed that the latter would find valuable information in the INCB report, especially in chapter 3, on general drug-related trends in various continents and countries.

17. The CHAIRPERSON thanked Mr. Ghodse for his contribution.

18. Ms. BASSANI (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that UNICEF had been invited by the Norwegian Government to collaborate on a project entitled the "Oslo Challenge Project", which was in two parts. The first part consisted of studying the potential role of the media and modern technology in the observance of the rights of the child and preparing, on the basis of the results, a guide on children and the media, similar to the handbook on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, dealing with ways to help children become informed consumers and actually participate in the media. That activity would be carried out under the supervision of the Children's Ombudsman of Norway. UNICEF had just agreed to be a member of the management committee for the initiative; other members of the committee included the International Federation of Journalists, the International Clearing House on Children and Violence on the Screen of UNESCO, the secretariat of the world summit on TV for children, representatives of digital media organizations and young people. UNICEF earnestly hoped that some members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child would also agree to sit on that committee.

19. The second part of the Oslo project would consist of organizing an event on 20 November 1999 in the Norwegian capital to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Norwegian Ministry of the Family and Children

would be inviting its counterparts from other countries, as well as various NGOs and specialized agencies, to the event, to which the Committee was also invited, although details of the programme were as yet not known to UNICEF.

20. Ms. KARP, recalling that the Committee had set up a working group on children and the media, asked if that group was in touch with the organizers of the Oslo project and, if not, how any future coordination was to be assured.

21. Ms. SARDENBERG said that, in the light of the increasingly significant role played by the media in society, she was very interested in the Oslo project and was sure that the Committee could make a contribution to it. She requested UNICEF to pass on all the details it had on the programme for the event as it received them.

22. Mr. DOEK asked for more information on what exactly was expected of the Committee in respect of the event in Oslo on 20 November 1999.

23. Ms. BASSANI (UNICEF) said that, unfortunately, she had as yet little information to give. She had understood that the preparation of the aforementioned guide had been recommended by the Working Group on Children and the Media, but she had no idea of the nature and extent of the relationship between the Working Group and the organizers of the Oslo project. She assumed that it was on account of its legal expertise and experience in interpreting article 17 of the Convention that the Committee was expected to take part. All she could say was that the project dealt with the media in the broad sense of the word, including the Internet, and that the main aim would be to get media professionals to reflect on the rules of conduct that they themselves would have to agree upon. She assured the Committee that she would pass on to it all the information she could, as she received it.

24. The CHAIRPERSON thanked Ms. Bassani for her contribution. She stressed that the Committee had agreed that the tenth anniversary of the Convention would not be celebrated on a specific day. Since most countries had ratified the Convention in 1990, the year 2000 was actually just as important as the year 1999 and the Norwegian Government should consider 20 November 1999 as simply the starting point for celebrations that would last a whole year.

25. Mr. HERNANDEZ PULIDO (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that discussions on the adoption of a convention and recommendations concerning the prohibition and immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour would be resumed at the 87th session of the International Labour Conference, which had just opened. After the discussions at the first meeting on that issue in June 1998, questionnaires had been sent to Governments and various institutions, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The replies to those questionnaires had been used in drafting the IV2A report and then the draft text, which had led to the IV2V report. Those two reports would serve as the basis for the work of the technical commission and would, to a large extent, determine the contents of the convention on the worst forms of child labour, which were still awaiting definition but would undoubtedly include forced labour, trafficking, slavery, bondage and child prostitution, as well as the use of children in pornography.

26. The new convention, which would not replace ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment, would concern children under the age of 18. Member States would be called upon to take steps to prevent and prohibit the forms of work targeted by that instrument and to set up programmes for the reintegration of the children concerned in society. He welcomed the Committee's decision to be represented by one of its members, Mr. Doek, at the forthcoming discussions on the draft convention, and said he was sure that the new convention would allow ILO and the Committee to further intensify their cooperation.

27. Mr. DOEK said that the States parties to the new convention should prepare domestic instruments to monitor its implementation, and proposed for that purpose that a list should be drawn up of the points against which the application of the various provisions could be checked, by the Committee among others.

28. Mr. HERNANDEZ PULIDO (ILO), in reply to a question by the Chairperson, said that the draft convention would probably be adopted at the current session of the International Labour Conference, but that a number of terms still had to be defined. With regard to Mr. Doek's concern, he said that it had not yet been determined which domestic authorities would be responsible for ensuring implementation of the convention, and that all the necessary information would be forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible.

29. The CHAIRPERSON thanked Mr. Hernandez Pulido for his contribution.

30. Ms. MALUWA (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)) said that more and more children and young people were falling victim to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. More than 3 million children had been infected by HIV in 1998. In response to that plague, UNAIDS had decided to use the World AIDS Campaign to promote children's rights in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. That campaign should not only help to raise public awareness of how the epidemic affected children, but should also allow targeted programmes that took children's rights into account to be drawn up and put into effect at the national level. For the 1997 World AIDS Campaign, UNAIDS had adopted as its theme "Children living in a world with AIDS", which was very much in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The 1999 World AIDS Campaign also gave priority to children and young people. UNAIDS was currently working on the publication of several documents on children's rights in the context of HIV/AIDS and a booklet containing the recommendations of the day of general discussion on children and HIV/AIDS and linking those recommendations to the various articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The brochure could provide a useful reference tool for the Committee in its dialogue with States parties.

31. Ms. RENAUD (UNAIDS) pointed out that over half of the people infected by HIV were aged under 25 and that efforts to inform children and young people about the risks and available preventive measures had not stopped the epidemic from spreading. That failure could be partly explained by the fact that children were not sufficiently involved in devising and implementing preventive and care programmes. It was therefore vital to heed children's views and concerns, children needed to live in a world, free from any discrimination, where they enjoyed all necessary protection. The 1999 World AIDS Campaign, the main theme of which was communication with children and young people, was pursuing two main objectives: to raise

public awareness of the need to listen to children and young people in order to make prevention and care truly effective, and to strengthen AIDS programmes for and with children and young people. In that respect, the Committee could play a very important role by encouraging Governments to take steps to protect children from HIV and to reduce the discrimination from which HIV/AIDS-infected children suffered. It could also encourage Governments to draw up and implement policies to promote the healthy development of children and young people and to respect and guarantee their rights, which would make them less vulnerable in terms of HIV/AIDS. Governments could also be encouraged to review their domestic policies so as to give full effect to the rights of children and young people to participation, education, health services, support and care, voluntary screening and advice, and freedom from discrimination. Also, Governments should encourage youth groups to organize workshops for government officials on the usefulness and effectiveness of the participation of young people. Finally, she thanked the Committee for its considerable support in the area of children and HIV/AIDS, and said she looked forward to carrying on with that collaboration in the current campaign.

32. Ms. KARP asked whether UNAIDS provided any technical assistance to help countries develop strategies and programmes for the prevention of AIDS and whether it provided coordination in that area.

33. Ms. SARDENBERG welcomed the statistical update on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the suggestions for the dialogue with Governments. She hoped that UNAIDS would cooperate with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations for monitoring in that area.

34. The CHAIRPERSON asked if a representative of UNAIDS would henceforth take part in the work of the pre-sessional working group of the Committee, as well as in the dialogue with States parties.

35. Ms. MALUWA (UNAIDS) said that a memorandum of understanding had been signed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with a view to the participation of a representative of UNAIDS in all the treaty-monitoring bodies and that applications for the post were currently being considered. In that connection, she stressed that UNAIDS was not an executive body but a secretariat co-sponsored by six international agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank). She added that the main role of UNAIDS was to coordinate technical assistance in that area, and that it was open to all suggestions on practical action to combat the epidemic.

36. Ms. MOKHUANE asked if UNAIDS could play a part in obtaining the financial support that would be necessary, for example, to help HIV-positive mothers in some developing countries.

37. Ms. RENAUD (UNAIDS) said that UNAIDS provided support to pilot projects in low-income countries where women had very high HIV infection rates, to reduce, by means of Zidovudine (AZT), the risk of infection to the children of HIV-positive mothers.

38. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the representatives of UNAIDS for their contribution.

39. Ms. DROZ (International Movement ATD Fourth World) gave a history of that international movement against poverty and social exclusion, founded in 1957 by Father Joseph Wresinski. She recalled the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the establishment of the TAPORI movement, a worldwide movement of friendship and solidarity bringing together children from all kinds of backgrounds, the International Year of the Child in 1979 and the many efforts by NGOs to help the poorest children. On several occasions, children's delegations had talked to officials from various international bodies, from the Council of Europe to national presidents, to encourage Governments and their people to do everything in their power to really improve the lot of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, inspired by the refusal to accept the suffering of children and their families, particularly the poorest of them, had been unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. In 1996, the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, TAPORI had launched a major campaign called "Making my contribution". In November 1999, around a hundred 10- to 12-year-olds from some 20 countries from all over the world would be meeting for an international forum. On 19 November they would be visiting the Palais des Nations and on 20 November, the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they would be received by Mrs. Mary Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights. She hoped that, with the arrival of the year 2000, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, the twenty-first century would be one of happiness for children.

40. Ms. SARDENBERG said she was glad that the International Movement ATD Fourth World was getting children to take part in the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the spirit of article 12 of the Convention.

41. Ms. DROZ (International Movement ATD Fourth World) said that a complete information pack on that event would soon be sent to members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

42. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the representative of the International Movement ATD Fourth World for her contribution and invited Committee members who so wished to share their comments with the representatives present.

43. Ms. KARP said it would be a good idea if the International Narcotics Control Board were to take account in its work not only of article 33 of the Convention (on the protection of children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances) but also of article 39 (on physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration) and the general principles laid down in the Convention.

44. Mr. ADACHI (International Narcotics Control Board) said it would be useful for INCB to receive information from the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the extent to which those articles were implemented by States parties. He also pointed out that article 38 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and article 20 of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances were relevant in that respect.

45. The CHAIRPERSON thanked all the speakers for their contribution.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.